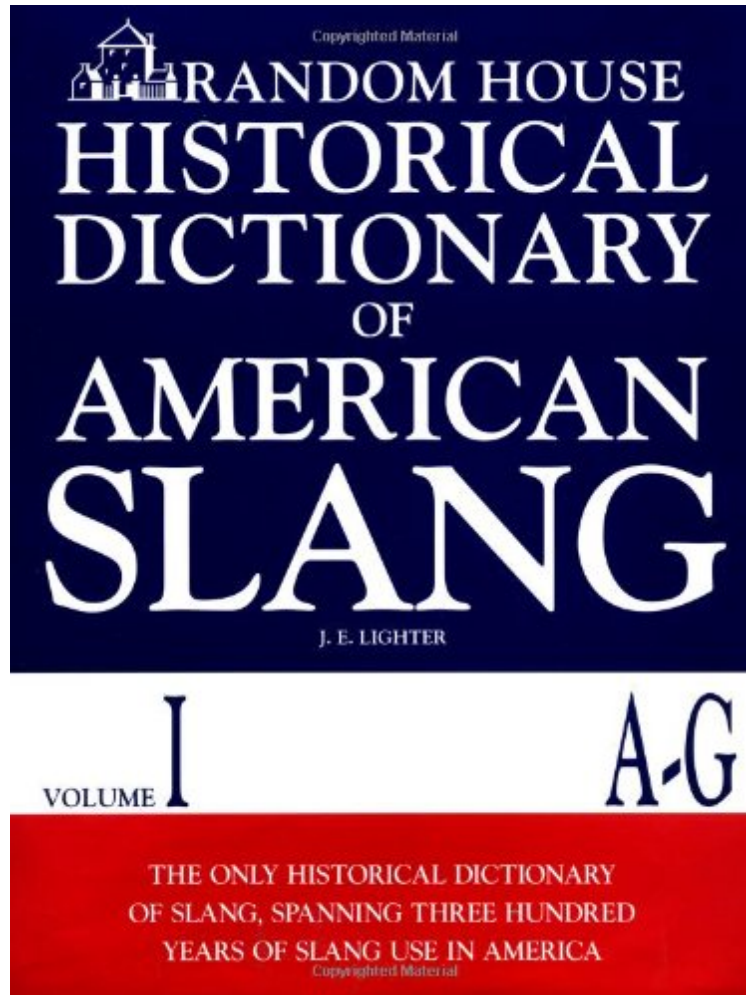


(Download ebook) Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, Vol. 1: A-G

# Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, Vol. 1: A-G

*Jonathan E. Lighter*

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**Jonathan E. Lighter** : **Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, Vol. 1: A-G** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, Vol. 1: A-G:

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. A lot of great slang starts with A through G!By A CustomerThis is by far the most satisfying slang dictionary I've ever seen. The entries include obscure words and phrases that most people have never heard of, as well as common terms with all their subtle shades of meaning. For example, f\*ck ("usually considered vulgar") exists as virtually every part of speech, and several pages are devoted solely to it. Definitions are straight forward, but the best part of the dictionary is the extensive usage quotes, given in

chronological order. I also have volume II (H-O); it is just as good. I eagerly await volume III.44 of 47 people found the following review helpful. Volume three may never make itBy John AbbottAccording to a fascinating article in the Wall Street Journal by Jennifer Ordonez (Sept 7, 2000), this dictionary may never get beyond the letter O. Random House have stopped work on the editing because of the cost, and linguist J E Lighter has stopped delivering the text because of a row over royalties. Ambitious dictionaries don't make a profit for publishers, and Random House says it only commissioned a one volume work originally, way back in 1984. But it has made some money. The article points out that the cult best-seller "The F-Word" is in fact an extraction of a single entry from volume 1 - published under project editor Jesse Sheidlower's name after Lighter refused to have his name used. One of the reasons Lighter has stopped giving material to Random House, says the article, is that he's worried they'll try and do the same thing with "the S-Word" and he doesn't want to be remembered as the F and S guy. You can read the whole article at wsj.com if you have a subscription.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Should we sue Random House???By settimio biondiSpectacular work, but...It is now 7 years that I have been waiting for this dictionary to be completed. I am now hearing that the third and last volume may not see light at all. The mere thought that Random House has brought its customers into a stupid situation like this is shocking. Not only it's a huge disappointment to its customers, but it's also a great loss to American lexicography. Does Random House think that this fiasco can be mended in the not too distant future? May we readers and customers expect a reply from Random House? What the hell.Does anybody know whether the deal between Random House and a British publisher, aimed at publishing the third volume was finally made?

The only historical dictionary of slang -- spanning three hundred years of slang use in America.

From Library JournalSlang dictionaries abound, but none offers the linguistic depth, historical range, and scholarly verve of the new Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang (RHHDAS), principally the work of Lighter (English, Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville). The initial volume (A-G) comprises some 10,000 headwords, 20,000 definitions, and 90,000 citations. Volume 2 (H-R) is scheduled for publication in 1996, with Volume 3 (S-Z) to follow in 1997. When completed, the dictionary will provide detailed lexicographic information on all major slang (words and phrases) used in the United States from Colonial times to the present; no effort has been made to cover purely Canadian terms. Because of the nature of slang (nonstandard English), entries include many obscenities-the "F" word alone accounts for a dozen pages-as well as racial epithets and other taboo or potentially offensive language. What sets RHHDAS apart from other slang dictionaries is its systematic historical approach-that is, terms are not only defined but their etymological development is traced chronologically through dated citations. For instance, the entry "ace" as an adjective meaning expert (as in ace reporter) is embellished with 11 citations, the first from *Sob Sister* (a novel published in 1930) and the last from the TV program *21 Jump Street* in 1988. RHHDAS also furnishes an extensive annotated bibliography of other important slang dictionaries, including Wentworth and Flexner's classic *Dictionary of American Slang* (LJ 8/75), which RHHDAS complements and largely replaces. A bodacious undertaking, Lighter's dictionary represents a major contribution to lexicographic scholarship. It belongs in every serious reference collection. [For another resource on slang, see Esther Lewin and Albert E. Lewin's *The Thesaurus of Slang*, rev. ed., reviewed above.-Ed.]-Ken Kister, author of "Best Encyclopedias," Tampa, Fla.--Ken Kister, author of "Best Encyclopedias," Tampa, Fla.Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistA fascinating mixture of the clever, the colorful, the crude, and the coarse, this first historical dictionary to be devoted exclusively to American slang has been in progress for more than two decades. Volume 1 of the projected three-volume set covers A-G; volumes 2 (H-R) and 3 (S-Z) are scheduled for publication in 1996 and 1997, respectively. In his excellent 27-page introduction, Lighter, a research associate in the English department of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, traces the historical development of slang in the English language and discusses its sociological and cultural aspects. Following the introduction, Lighter provides a useful, annotated bibliography of significant books and articles dealing with American slang and an admirably thorough guide to the dictionary.Defining slang as "an informal, nonstandard, nontechnical vocabulary composed chiefly of novel-sounding synonyms for standard words and phrases," Lighter notes that his intent in this compilation is to treat words and phrases that can be considered American slang, either presently or in the past. Therefore, some of the entries are for terms now considered colloquial or even Standard English (e.g., bamboozle, cliffhanger, dandy, flapper, fluke), but which were at one time viewed as slang. Other entries range from informal, inoffensive words and phrases that make our language more lively and interesting (e.g., can of worms, circular file, foodaholic, goof off, grungy) to terms that are generally considered offensive or vulgar, such as racial and ethnic epithets and expressions pertaining to sexual relations and body functions.Entry headwords are arranged letter by letter (e.g., bassackwards precedes bass fiddle), with phrases usually appearing within the entry for the main word of the phrase. Abbreviated field labels indicating that a particular group of people uses the word (e.g., military, underground) precede the definition when appropriate. Usage and status labels are used to indicate other aspects of a term, for instance, whether it is usually considered vulgar or offensive or whether it is generally used jocularly or derisively.The approximately 20,000 definitions included in this volume are models of succinctness.

Following each definition are illustrative quotations, which are arranged chronologically, beginning with the earliest documented use. These quotations, which are the true heart of each entry, serve not only to document a word's usage at a particular time but also to further elucidate its meaning. Culled from a wide variety of written and oral sources, including literary works, popular novels, other dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, television programs, and anonymous conversations, the more than 90,000 quotations in this volume range from the seventeenth century to the 1990s. The degree of currency is particularly impressive since a number of 1993 sources, and at least one 1994 publication, are represented. A complete list of the approximately 8,000 sources cited throughout the dictionary will not appear until volume 3. This delay may prove problematic for users trying to locate the source of a quotation because titles are provided in abbreviated form. For example Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler* is referred to as "N. McCall, *Wanna Holler*." While there is no denying that perusing the pages of this volume can rattle one's sensibilities, the increasing permissiveness regarding language in today's society cannot be ignored. Only a decade or so ago, many of the words in this work were considered taboo, not just in polite society but also in the mass media. Today the infamous f word and words and phrases of similar ilk are cropping up in song lyrics, films, television programs, literary works, and mainstream magazines. The increasing usage and heightened awareness of such terms are not only reflected in this volume, but also make its publication even more timely and appropriate. When completed, Lighter's dictionary will be, without a doubt, the most definitive and scholarly treatment of American slang ever published. Most academic and large public libraries will want to add this work, since its historical treatment complements the coverage of slang terms in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* and *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Getting down to the nitty-gritty, Lighter evidently is cooking with gas because he has done a bang-up job in compiling this tome. In short, it's awesome, fantabulous, rad, the cat's meow! "A landmark publication, at on estroke sweeping its predecessors into the shade. . . It is one of those rare books that prompts the realization that you have never seen the subject in such sharp focus before."--John A. Simpson, Chief Editor, *Oxford English Dictionary* "A monumental book."--*The New York Times* "Will do for nonstandard English what the *Oxford English Dictionary* did for the whole language" .--William Safire "No one has ever created a scholarly work that is more fun."--*Newsweek* "The funniest. . . work of profound lexicographical slang-scholarship ever published. . . The book belongs on every patriotice coffee table."--Nicholson Baker, *The New Revies of Books* "A browser's joy. . . an awesome tribute to the American popular imagination."--*Boston Globe*